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ABSTRACT

Hispanic families can be empowered through parent training workshops focusing on the development of competency based interpersonal communication skills. Nearly 50% of the Latinos in the United States are at risk of dropping out before graduating from high school. They believe that their family obligations come first and that the school system is inequitable, so they feel powerless to succeed in educational, vocational, and civic communication situations. The Orange and San Diego Counties Migrant Education Office sponsored a parents' conference at Golden West College in Huntington Beach, California. After a keynote address, workshops were conducted on five methods of increasing the self-esteem of Hispanic migrant students. Spanish-language worksheets, designed for all levels of reading proficiency, were used to facilitate the acquisition of communication competency skills. Workshop members role-played communication scenarios and then participated in oral analysis of the communication competencies demonstrated in the role playing. (Worksheets used in the workshops are included.) (RS)

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Using La Familia Communication Competency Skills to Empower Hispanic At-Risk Students

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presented to the SCA Panel:

Facilitating Communication In The Hispanic Community

Atlanta, Georgia Nov. 1, 1991

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Hispanics Dropping Out of School

A significant amount of Hispanic students drop out before graduating from high school. According to estimates reported by the U.S. Bureau Of The Census (1990), the number of Hispanics is approaching 25 million . The Hispanic population's largest age group consists of young people 5 to 17 years of age which adds up to approximately 4.5 million. This is the K-12 age group that has Hispanic educators sadly declaring that, "For every 100 Latino students who enter kindergarten only 55 graduate from high school. 25 enter college, and only 7 graduate from a four-year college." (Navarro, 1991). Statistics presented at a recent youth leadership panel sponsered by the Hispanic Caucus of the California School Boards Association showed that 28% of California's Latino high school students drop out before graduation and that nearly 50% of the country's Latinos drop out of high school nationwide.

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Family Obligations and Inequitable School Policies

There are three reasons why Latino students are dropping out before graduating from high school. The first reason is that Latino students have strong ties to their family and feel they have an obligation to help their family survive. Latinos find themselves in a "state of war with the gang infrastructure having turfs of control with drug economies," in Latino communities across the nation (Navarro, 1990). Therefore, the first priority is to guarantee the family's physical safety by affilliating with the "homeys" (local gang culture youths). Latinos may not aspire to become gang members but they maintain relationships with gang members in order to assure safe passage for the family in the community. Thus, they may show a disregard for school attendance in order to conform to the gang culture's expectations and help the family survive. The second reason is that in order to help their family survive, Latinos feel obligated to choose economics rather than school as their first priority (Rendon & Taylor, 1989-90). This sense of obligation coupled with our nation's "high demand for cheap labor and a premium on teenage consumption," is luring teenagers away from schools and into the job market (Thompson, 1990) The third reason Latino students are dropping out before they graduate from high school is because educational per pupil spending is inequitable throughout the country (Fulton, 1990). Some schools spend three times as much per student as others. According to Times staff writer Bob Sector, "In Illinois the annual spending stretches from $2,100 per youngster in the worst endowed district to more than $12,000 in the most flush." (1990). This means that school districts can't afford to hire sufficient bilingual teachers to meet the cultural and language needs of students in impoverished Latino communities. In Los Angeles, an additional inequity exists in the way most immigrant students are excluded from the district's magnet schools which were intended to provide top-flight education for high achievers, because nearly every class is taught only in English. "The sad fact is students aren't being identified as gifted until they learn English," (Castruita-McShane, 1991). Thus, the inequitable method used in assessing Latino

students' oral critical thinking and English language proficiency is the primary deterrance Latinos encounter in their efforts to "drop in" to the educational system. It's such a difficult struggle to insist on their rights when there are so many barriers for them to fight, that many Latino students take the road of least resistance and drop out before graduating from high school.

Latinos Lack Speaking Skills to Empower Themselves

The harm in letting Latino students continue to drop out is that without the tools of empowerment such as education, jobs, or a voice in city hall, the increase in Latino population can lead to a "de facto apartheid" situation in which Latinos will be relegated, as a people to a permanent underclass of citizens (Navarro, 1991). In California's Orange County, for example, immigrant Hispanic students very often come from homes in which verbal interaction is limited. Their parents are often illiterate and lack the speaking skills to provide support for their children in school. When they go to school they have to interact with teacher's aides who have limited language skills themselves. Out of the 527 teachers employed by Orange county's Anaheim Elementary School District, only 31 speak Spanish. The Hispanic students residing in the Jeffrey-Lynne area of the school district are highly transient and live in poor housing. Most of the time, three families live in one 3 bedroom apartment. It is not unusual for 16 kids to live in one apartment (Lopez, 1991).

The Jeffrey-Lynne neighborhood is an apartment ghetto behind the Disneyland Hotel. It is typical of the home and family lifestyle today's immigrant Hispanic student's come from. It is a neighborhood dominated by unskilled laborers who are the backbone of Anaheim's biggest and best known industry---hotel maids, dishwashers, janitors, restaurant workers, gardners, and other jobs that require little or no language or communication skills. Immigrant Hispanic students (mostly Mexican) are presently at-risk of dropping out of school in Orange County because they live in fear, as their parents do, of: (1) having their lighting maintenance and trash collection needs neglected because city workers are "intimidated" by Latino customs and

their use of "rapid-fire" Spanish, (2) being exploited by landlords who overcharge them for overcrowded apartments, yet fail to participate in plans for improving the area, (3) not having access to health care and other social services because of their inability to speak English, (4) not being able to trust in the police to protect them from the criminal element selling drugs, using drugs, or fighting gang wars because of the profits drugs offer jobless, unskilled residents and (5) not having the respect that comes from being "literate" so that their voice will be heard and their problems resolved (Fulton, 1990).

Empowering La Familia Through Parent Training

Whenever the dominant society perceives members of the minority society as inferior in any way, members of the minority society perceive themselves as being apprehensive about communicating in public and as lacking in self-esteem. The fear of losing their children's respect by going to school and revealing their "ignorance", was keeping many of Orange County's migrant education parents from helping their children. In order to motivate parents of migrant students to increase their self-esteem and make the most out of their school experience, the Orange and San Diego Counties Migrant Education Office sponsered a parents conference at Golden West College in Huntington Beach, California on the 26th of January, 1991. The theme of the conference was "La Primera Fuente De Conocimiento" (The First Source of Knowledge). In the keynote address,"Los Padres Son La Primera Fuente De Conocimiento," (Parents Are the First Source of Knowledge), I emphasized the fact that parents are natural teachers. I asked them to remember everything their parents had taught them and that they were now passing on to their children. I asked them why it was typical of "nuestra Raza " (our People) to teach each other. Hands went up all over the forum of 200 conference participants. The verbal response was loud and clear, "Para Sobrevivir!" (To Survive!) I congratulated them on their collective wisdom and invited them to progress from the goal of survival to the goal of success. Then, we formed break-out workshops on the following methods of increasing the self-esteem of Hispanic

migrant students. (1) Health Services for Parents of Migrant Students, (2) Two Methods, Two Systems-One Resolution, The Binational Program" (3) Sex Education for Your Children, (4) Opportunidades Para Asistir Al Colegio (Opportunities to Attend college) and (5) Communicando Se Aprende (We Learn by Communicating). Each workshop was conducted two times.

Facilitating La Familia Competency Based Communication

The worksheets I used to facilitate parent/student interpersonal communication interactions are based on criterion referenced communication competencies. First, I explained that we all go through a specific process when we communicate with each other and that the process is dynamic and that we can empower ouselves by talking to each other about the way we maintain our relationships. Next I used the overhead projector to describe the communication competencies needed for "Pidiendo Y Ofreciendo Apoyo en Situaciones de Educacion Migratoria" (Requesting and Giving Moral Support in Migrant Education Situations). I was concerned that some of the parents and students might be illiterate in either Spanish or English. I drew upon reading readiness methodology which provides Latino students with "wordless picture books" to encourage language and concept development (Brown and Montoya, 1991), by assigning a symbol to represent specific communication behaviors which I described bilingually so that all levels of reading proficiency present were able to share in their meanings. This seemed to alleviate the fear many of those present felt because there was no need to read the printed information Thus, the fear of appearing "ignorant" was removed and everyone felt free to participate orally.

Following, are the worksheets I used to facilitate the acquisition of "La Familia" communication competency skills in order to empower both parents and students to break the at-risk cycle faced by Hispanics in Orange County.

Migrant Education Program
Margarett Lewis, Asst. Director

California Speech Comm. Assoc.
Norma Landa Flores, Consultant

Comunicando Se Aprende:
Tallér Sobre los Conocimientos de Hablár y Escuchár para Apoyár a los Hijos en sus Estudios

Propósito: Entrenamiento de como los padres pueden asistír a los hijos que corren el riesgo de no completár sus estudios.

Descripción de los Conocimientos:

Conocimiento	Interaccción

1. Descripciones Comportivos: "Has faltado dos semanas de clases de matemática." (acciones)

2. Preguntas Abiertas: "Que te pasa?"(preguntas empesando con Porqué, Como, Cuando, Donde)

3. Parafrase: "O, te sientes mal porque el maestro te gritó en frente de la clase?"
(Referencia oral a los sentimientos sobresalientes de la conversación)

4. Pregunta Cerrada Para Clarificár: "Te gritó porque haces muchas preguntas or porque no te importa que estas faltando las clases?"
(Solicitando repuestas de si o no en referencia a los puntos sobresalientes)

5. Recordación de Información: "Hace un minuto que me acabas de decír que el maestro no to comprende."
(Referencia oral al discubrimiento sobresaliente y cuando paso, por ejemplo: ayer, el otro dia, esta manana, anoche, hace un momento)

6. Información de Experencia Similár: "Esos son mis sentimientos tabien. Yo arreglé ese tipo de problema con mis jefes en el trabajo explicándoles como arreglaria los asuntos de mi familia después y antes del trabajo. Haci les hice entendér que quiero sobresalír.
(Compartiendo una experencia similár y el modo en que se pudo resolvér el problema, conservando el valór similár de los conversantes)

7. Consolación: "O, no te trates tan duramente!" (No te preocupes, cálmate, esta bien)

8. Felicitación: "Eres muy inteligente!" (Cumplido, Atento, Honesto, Responsable, Listo...)

9. **Información Apropiada: Las acciónes que mejor puedan resolvér el problema para todos los participantes en el mismo lugár, al mismo tiempo y affectados por la misma situación.**

Migrant Education Program
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Modelo de Interacción para Animár y Apoyár a Los Hijos en sus Estudios

Descripción de la Situación:

Lugar: Esta conversacion pasa en la sala de un apartamento en Costa Mesa, California.

Tiempo: Es Martes a las nueve y media de la mañana.

Participantes: Una madre, sin esposo, de cuatro hijos de las edades de once años hasta 17 años. Trabaja de cocinera en un restaurante por las mañanas y limpia casas en las tardes. Habla con su hijo mayor de 17 años. El la tiene que ayudár con los gastos de la familia. Trabaja de lava platos en el mismo restaurante por las mañanas hasta las ocho, entonces se va a la high school, y cuando se terminan las clases trabaja con su tio limpiando negocios hasta las nueve de la noche. La familia de su tio y la de su madre viven en el mismo apartamento.

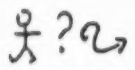
El Conflicto: La madre acaba de recibir un mensaje de la high school porque el hijo a faltado de asistir varias clases de matematica por la mananas. Los consejeros de la escuela piensan que la familia no motiva al joven que estudie. El joven no sabe expresarse para pedir apoyo.

El Valor Similár: La madre, el hijo, el maestro y consejeros desean sobrevivír para sobresalír.

Conocimientos	Hablante	Interaccion
Descripciones comportivos y preguntas abiertas para iniciar la conversación.	1a. Madre: 1b.	Oye, Alex, me dicen de la escuela que has faltado dos semanas de clases de matematica. Que te pasa?
	2a. Hijo: 2b. 2c. 2d. 2e.	Tengo problemas con el maestro de matematica. No pienso que nos llevamos bien. Me gritó en voz alta porque le hice muchas preguntas y dijo que entenderia si pasara el mismo tiempo en los asuntos de la clase que paso en los asuntos de mi familia.
Respondencia a discubrimiento con parafrase y pregunta cerrada que clarifica.	3a. Madre: 3b. 3c. 3d.	O, te sientes mal porgue te gritó en frente de la clase el maestro de matematica. Piensas que te gritó porque haces muchas preguntas o porque parece que no te importa que estas faltando las clases?
	4a. Hijo: 4b.	Ninguno. Yo pienso que el se pone impaciente con migo porque no nos comprendemos. Tu que piensas?
Rocordación de información y preguntas abiertas para formentár mas discubrimiento sobre detalles de la condición.	5a. Madre: 5b. 5c. 5d.	Pues, hace un minuto que me acabas de decír que el maestro de matematica no te comprende. A la mejór no se comprenden porque el piensa que tu no tienes ganas de asistír a la clase. Porque no tienes ganas?

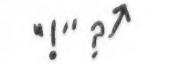
Conocimientos	Hablante	Interaccion
	6a. Hijo:	Mi primera responsabilidad es a mi familia. No les
	6b.	puedo faltar.
Respondencia a discubrimiento de sentimiento por medios informativos de experencia similar y pregunta abierta para formentar mas discubrimiento sobre la condición.	7a. Madre:	Si, yo comprendo. Esos son mis sentimientos tabien.
	7b.	Yo arreglé ese tipo de problema con mis jefes en el
	7c.	trabajo cuando les di a entender a ti y a tus hermanos
	7d.	que solamente los puedo llevar al médico, o hablar con
	7e.	sus consejeros antes o despues del trabajo. Asi se
	7f.	dieron cuenta mis jefes que soy trabajadora motivada.
	7g.	Puedo organizar mi tiempo para acomodar las necesidades de todos. Porqde no trates de ser lo mismo?
	8a. Hijo:	Si soy organizado. Trabajo y voy a la high school al
	8b.	mismo tiempo. Pero no tengo ganas de ir a la clase de
	8c.	matematica cuando me grita el maestro. A la mejor
	9d.	que piensa que se me hace muy duro la matematica y
	9e.	que soy bien burro! Piensas que soy tan burro que
	9f.	me debia de salir de la escuela?
Consolación y felicitación	10a. Madre:	O, no te trates tan duramente! Yo pienso que eres
	10b.	muy inteligente. Me ayudastes inmigrar a este pais
	10c.	y estas aprendiendo una idioma nueva, verdad?
	10d.	Hasta el maestro y los consejeros de la escuela dicen
	10e.	que eres inteligente. Por eso quieren que completas
	10f.	tus estudios de high school y que vayas al colegio.
	11a. Hijo:	Yo se que tengo que quedarme en la high school para
	11b.	ir al colegio y conseguir un buen trabajo. Pero no
	11c.	pienso que me puedo arreglar con el maestro de
	11d.	matematica. No me gusta que me grite. Mejor me
	11e.	quedo a trabajar unas cuantas horas mas para poder
	11f.	ayudarte con los gastos. Tu me puedes escribir una
	11g.	nota a la escuela. Diles que te ayudo traducir cuando
	11h.	vas al médico o la oficina de inmigración. Esta bien?
Respondencia a ofertas de asistencia honestamente dando información apropriada sobre las condiciones.	12a. Madre:	Muchas gracias por la oferta, pero prefierro que
	12b.	se den cuenta tus consejeros y maestro que si
	12c.	somos familia motivada y organizada. Voy a ser una
	12d.	cita con tu maestro para que aclaremos el problema.
	12e.	Explicale al maestro que no te gusta que te griten en
	12f.	frente de todos los otros estudiantes. Pidele que te
	12g.	diga si es tu idioma o tu actitude que presenta el
	12h	probleme. Asi pueden hallar un remedio juntos.
	12i.	Estoy segura que entre todos podemos regresarte las
	12j.	ganas de ir a la clase de matematica.
	13a. Hijo:	Esta bien, haga la cita. Si va usted conmigo, entonces
	13b.	si puedo hablarle y arreglar el asunto. Tabien se va
	13c.	dar cuenta que mi familia sabe como comunicar para
	13d.	sobrevivir y sobresalir. Grácias por su apoyo!

Modelo de Interacción Entre Hablantes Para Apoyár a Los Hijos

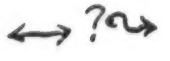


1. Hablante usó descripciones comportivos y preguntas abiertas

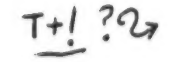
2. Escuchante usó descripciones comportivos del problema



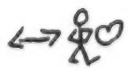
3. Hablante usó respondencia a discubrimiento con parafrase y pregunta cerrada para clarificár



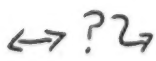
4. Escuchante expresó su opinion sobre la pregunta y usó pregunta abierta



5. Hablante usó recordacion de informacion y preguntas abiertas para formentar mas descubrimiento sobre detalles de la condicion



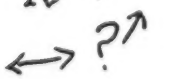
6. Escuchante compartió sentimiento y deber



7. Hablante respondió a discubrimiento de sentimiento por medios informativos de experencia similar y usó pregunta abierta para formentár mas discubrimiento sobre la condición.

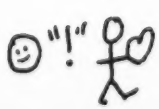
8. Escuchante explicó el conflicto, reveló un temor, y pidió apoyo

9. Hablante dió consolación y felitación



10. Escuchante ofreció asistencia a la familia en ves de a los estudios, uso prequnta cerrada para verificár el entendimiento

11. Hablante respondió a ofertas de asistencia honestamente dando información apropriada sobre las condiciones



13. Escuchante aprobó y usó parafrase del consejo y expresó su sentimiento y valor sobre la solución.

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Demostración de Conocimientos:
Interacción para Animár y Apoyár a los Hijos en sus Estudios

Nombres de Hablantes:_____ _____

Lugár:_____

Tiempo_____

Participantes_____

_____

_____

El Conflicto_____

El Valór Similár_____

Conocimientos **Interacción**

1. Usaron descripciones comportivos _____ Si No
   y preguntas abiertas para iniciár
   la conversación. _____ Si No

2. Respondieron a discubrimiento_____ Si No
   con parafrase y pregunta cerrada
   que clarifica_____ Si No

3. Recordaron informacion y usaron_____ Si No
   preguntas abiertas para formentár mas descubrimiento
   sobre detalles de la condición_____ Si No

4. Respondieron a discubrimiento_____ Si No
   de sentimiento por medios informativos
   de experencia similár_____ Si No
   y pregunta abierta para formentár
   mas discubrimiento sobre la condición_____ Si No

5. Ofrecieron consolación y felicitación_____ Si No

6. Respondieron a ofertas de asistencia honestamente_____ Si No
   dando información apropriada
   sobre las condiciones_____ Si No

Impacto_____ Mas Práctica_____ Mucho Mas Práctica_____

Oral Collaboration

The process I used to facilitate parent/child interpersonal communication was as follows. First, I asked for two volunteers to role play the Interaction Model as shown on pp. 7-8 while the other parent-child dyads and triads, some of the students had invited both parents, listened to the interaction. After the role play I asked for oral analysis of the communication competencies we had heard, by pointing to the symbols and asking for volunteers to paraphrase portions of the interaction. Second, I asked the class to collaborate on a representative interaction by everyone joining in to give the parent and the child suggestions on how to interact with each other while using the communication skills we had just learned. After we constructed an interaction around the context of a son telling his mother that he didn't want to continue attending his cub scout meetings. Various volunteers served as coaches to both mother and son to discover that he'd rather be in his brother's cub scout pack because his brother had a male scout leader and he was forced to learn "cooking and art stuff" from a female leader. The son said he'd rather stay home and keep his brother company while they both learned cooking from their mother. The whole group arrived at the conclusion that the mother should advice her son to switch to his brother's cub scout pack because they felt the family needed someone to serve as the male role model for the divorced woman's sons. Everyone felt they had communicated successfully.

The third step was to have each family unit use page 9, Modelo de Interaccion Entre Hablantes Para Apoyar a los Hijos" as a communication competency guide to outline their own family interactions. I said they could write out key phrases or could just "talk it over" until they felt they had all the movidas (strategies) well planned. I allowed the familias 15 minutes to outline and practice their interactions. Then we had a loteria (drew lots) to see which family would be first to role play their interaction. We only had time to observe two interactions, so the rest of the participants became evaluators. I assigned specific competencies for them to observe and paraphrase in order to let us know how appropriate they felt the interaction had been. All of the familias present agreed that the measure of appropriateness was empowerment rather than motivation, since empowerment can be described in terms of behavior, as the evaluation forms on page 10 illustrate.

Conclusion

In summary, nearly 50% of the nation's Latinos are at risk of dropping out before graduating from high school. They believe that their family obligations come first and that the school system is inequitable anyway, so they feel powerless to succeed in educational, vocational, and civic communication situations. This paper presented a method bilingual-bicultural speech communication educators can use to empower Hispanic families through parent training workshops focusing on the development of competency based interpersonal communication skills.

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